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SUBJECT: Iraqi Refugee Arrivals Proceeding: 866 of 2500
Settled to Date

¶1. (U) Summary: A total of 866 Iraqi refugees have arrived of the 2500 that Germany agreed to resettle under the terms of last year's European Union agreement. This is the first time that Germany has worked with the UNHCR to permanently resettle refugees directly from overseas. Iraqi refugee selections are based on need for protection and it is expected to take until the end of the year before all 2500 have arrived. Germany-based representatives of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) hope that this experience will result in the German government accepting more refugees in the future. End summary

¶2. (U) In November 2008, the EU Member State Justice and Home Affairs Ministers agreed to resettle 10,000 Iraqi refugees who have fled to Syria and Jordan. German Interior Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble was a motivating force in the EU for the decision to accept the refugees. With 2500 (2000 from Syria and 500 from Jordan), Germany is resettling the most refugees of any EU member state, followed by France with 1,800. Nasim Faruk, the deputy head of IOM's program in Germany, discussed the refugee resettlement program with EconOffs.

Eligibility Criteria

¶3. (SBU) Although Schaeuble initially suggested that preference would be given to accepting Christian refugees this has not turned out to be the case. MoI desk officer Arndt Sartorius (Directorate for Migration, Refugees, Integration, European Harmonization), indicated that the idea that the refugees be primarily Christian originated from representatives of (Protestant) churches and Schaeuble had repeated this suggestion to make the issue more saleable domestically. In actual practice, all refugees are selected based on their need for protection though many are, in fact, Christian.

¶4. (U) The refugees are drawn from a camp in Amman, Jordan and another camp outside Damascus, Syria. Officials from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) work together with representatives of UNHCR and IOM to identify potential candidates for resettlement in Germany. Germany's policy is to give resettlement preference to particularly vulnerable refugee populations that have no prospect of returning to Iraq safely and who also lack any opportunity for integration in Syria or Jordan. These include members of persecuted

(religious) minorities in Iraq, people who require specific medical help and single women with responsibility for caring for family members. Other selection criteria that are taken into consideration are integration skills (e.g., school and vocational training, professional experience and language skills), ensuring the unity of the family, and connections to Germany that can assist in integration.

15. (SBU) Resettlement candidates undergo security background screening and there are a number of criteria for exclusion based on past behavior. Individuals who played a significant role in maintaining the previous regime; individuals convicted of crimes that are regarded as premeditated offenses in Germany; and those with connections to criminal organizations or terrorist associations are excluded from the admission process. In some instances, the security screening has caused delays in admissions processing as individuals lack appropriate documentation and verifying information/police records is a lengthy process.

Refugee Processing

16. (U) In Syria, IOM makes initial contact with potential resettlement candidates and organizes their medical checks in the refugee camps in cooperation with UNHCR and representatives of German agencies on site. UNHCR conducts pre-selection interviews from which German officials base their assessment of eligibility. IOM also organizes the

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charter flights taking the refugees to Germany. The flights take refugees to Hannover for two weeks of in-processing at a central site in the nearby town of Friedland, Lower Saxony. During the in-processing, decisions are made concerning each refugee's settlement location. All sixteen of Germany's federal states are required to resettle a portion of the 2500 quota based on the size of the state. However, IOM's Faruk indicated that the sparsely populated state of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern has asked if they can pay to have their allotment relocated elsewhere in Germany.

17. (U) Many of the 866 refugees that have arrived to date belong to families with existing contacts or relatives in Germany. The majority of the 866 refugees belong to persecuted minorities, including Christians (477), Mandaeans and Yezidi. A small number were in need of medical assistance. Refugees receive free housing, language training, job placement assistance and a monthly stipend that is slightly higher than the usual amount for asylum seekers. The refugees are issued residence permits that entitle them to seek employment. Civil society groups provide continued integration assistance once the refugees have moved to their permanent residences.

Prospects for the Future

18. (U) IOM's Faruk hopes that if German political leaders view the resettlement of the 2500 Iraqis as a success, they will consider accepting more refugees from Iraq and other countries.. Along these lines, MoI's Sartorius mentioned ongoing discussions among EU member states on the creation of an EU solution to the problem of African migrants landing on the shores of Greece, Malta, Italy and other Mediterranean countries. However, earlier this month Minister Schaeuble stated that Germany was still burdened by the resettlement of Balkan refugees from the 1990s and he rejected a binding EU agreement to allocate African refugees among member states. Schaeuble argues for a voluntary model. However, Faruk does not view this as the last word on this matter and noted the extensive political debate that occurred prior to agreement on

the Iraqi refugee program. Faruk added that the German Embassy in Malta recently announced Germany's decision to resettle 14 Eritrean refugees stranded in Malta and held this as an example of Germany's willingness to continue refugee processing.

BRADTKE